

FREE THOUGHTS

Communicated to

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Free-THINKERS:

In Order to promote Thinking on the

N A M E

A N D

Works of G O D



With a RELATION of a remarkable
Providence, which fell out at Port-Royal
in *Jamaica*; suitable to the Subject.

Written at Sea.

By THOMAS CHALKLEY.

With a PREFACE* and POSTSCRIPT
by another Hand.

*The Fool hath said in his Heart, there is no
God, Psal. xiv. 1.*

The Second Edition.

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P R E F A C E.

THe Author, in the Course of his Conversation, having met with some Persons, who avowing the Principles he opposes in the following Tract, have been forward to assume the Character of *Freethinkers*, might have thereby been determin'd to such a Title and Direction of his Work. And as it is to be fear'd, the Number is too great of those who love a false Liberty both in Acting and Speaking, it is not to be wonder'd at, shou'd they endeavour to justify themselves therein by so specious a Pretence as that of Freedom. A Privilege so undeniable to every Man, that without it none could possibly be prais'd or condemn'd for any Determination or Action whatsoever; but it must be imputed to that Power alone, which imposes a Necessity towards either Good or Evil; so that in such Case all Distinction of Vertue and Vice must cease in our Apprehensions of Morality, and human Society lie in the greatest and most deplorable Confusion for Want of it. Far be it there-
fore

The PREFACE.

fore from any judicious or honest Person to endeavour to exclude or dissuade any from a just Freedom in Speculation or Practice. But let those who pretend to this, entirely satisfy themselves that they have fully and sincerely made Use of it, and that in their Enquiries they have faithfully collected and impartially consider'd that Evidence the Nature of the Subject might have requir'd, or has afforded them. Those who deny an eternal Existence, Power and Providence, which hath created and preserveth the World, seem neither to have observed Nature, nor consulted that Reason, which yet some of them may much pretend to follow. To such the following Considerations, are recommended by the Author ; which deserve to be read with Attention and Seriousness, for the Good-Will, Sake and sincere Views with which they seem to have been written.



The

The Author to the Reader.

THE Author having been much press'd in Spirit to write the following Considerations upon the present Subject and Occasion, begs they may be read with Attention, and examined without Prejudice. He hopes the learned and ingenious Reader will excuse any Faults in Stile or Method, having Respect to the Sincerity of Intention, which he professes to have had in this Undertaking; and humbly prays that a Divine Blessing may attend it to the Satisfaction and eternal Advantage of all whom it may concern.

T. C.



D.T



Free Thoughts communicated, &c.

HAVING had some Discourse with a young Man of bright natural Parts concerning another World, and of leaping out of this into that in the Dark, which must needs be very dangerous; and fearing that many take that great Leap out of this World into the next in that Manner, I have been induc'd to write these Lines.

UPON which I cannot forbear immediately asking, What Man in his Senses will venture (naturally speaking) to leap in the Dark he knows not where? Or into a Pit he knows not the Bottom of? To think of it is terrifying, and must needs shock any considerate Free-thinker.

NOW, tho' a Man having a bright Genius, and a large Share of Natural Parts, may acquire much Literal and Natural Knowledge; yet for Want of a Spiritual Understanding, which is deriv'd from the Divine Spirit, he may greatly err concerning true Faith and Religion, and have no Apprehension of the eternal Kingdom and Judgment of God, or of another World; which it might be well for the Ungodly were not,
or

or were never to be at all: which were it to be suppos'd, yet to live virtuously (as the Bishop of *Sarum* observ'd to that great Libertine the Earl of *Rochester*) would be an Advantage to Men even in this World.

BUT if there should be an Eternal Righteous Kingdom (of which we may be internally and spiritually sensible) and a State of Life therein to come; then, O then what will become of the Wicked, and all who forget God! and what Perturbation of Soul must attend such when under the Convictions thereof they shall be ready to launch into Eternity; I beseech thee, (O Soul) seriously to consider before it be too late:

THE great Saviour of the World says, *the Kingdom of God is within you*, Luk. 17. 21. that is, inwardly and spiritually to be known and perceiv'd. He also says, *I am the Light of the World*, John 8. 12. He by his divine and supernatural Light lights us thro' this dark World to his spiritual and glorious Kingdom, where he rules and reigns in transcendent Majesty and Brightness; of which his faithful Subjects are in some Measure sensible; Glory to the King of Kings for ever.

AND that eminently wise Apostle Paul says, *he was sent to turn Men from Darkness to Light*; Darkness he calls the *Power of Satan* and Light the *Power of God*. Now as a Man walking in outward Darkness is in continu-

Dark



Danger of falling, not knowing whether he goeth; so also a Man living and walking in spiritual Darkneſs (which is the Power of Satan, where the wonderful Power and Works of God cannot be ſeen nor underſtood) muſt needs be in the greateſt Danger of falling into the bottomleſs Pit of Perdition, where horrible Darkneſs and unutterable Miſery prevail for ever.

THE many bitter Cries, dreadful Shrieks, and heavy Groans, which my Ears have heard from ſuch dark Souls ready to depart the Body, have been enough to convince me of the Judgment of another World, tho' there had been no other Demonſtration of it to me. May our fine Wits and ſprightly Youths concern'd repent in Time. Oh, oh; my Heart is pained for them; and my Soul mourns in ſecret for many of my former and latter Acquaintance, as I have alſo tender Deſires for the Well-doing and Well-being of Mankind in General!

IF any by duly thinking of theſe Things ſhou'd be awaken'd and convinc'd of their State, and their former evil Lives and wicked Practices; and have ſo much Light as to ſee the Danger of living without God in the World; but be ready to conclude, that if there be indeed a righteous God, who will reward every Man according to his Works, there can then be no Hope for them ſuch wretched Sinners. Oh Souls (if this be the

Case of any) look not at such Thoughts, which in the midst of your just Apprehensions Satan taking Advantage may thus suggest to you? who having got you deep already in the Mire of Sin, wou'd by such Infusions plunge you deeper both into Sin and Despair!

BE it remembred that Christ died for Sinners, *even the Chief*, (as Paul says,) and he can make a Chief Salut of a chief Sinner, as appears in the Case of that Apostle by his own Testimony : God hath, and can do it, though it be wonderful!

WHEREFORE abide not in Darkness, but repeat and turn to the Light of Life! strive and struggle for Life, the Life of God in the Soul of Man! turn ye to the Divine Light, turn to God who is Light, and in him is no Darkness at all! live and walk in the Light of God, which is far above the Light of human Reason; therein shall we have Fellowship with the Father of Lights, and his Son *Jesus Christ*; whose Religion is Spiritual: *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, (aright) must worship him in Spirit and Truth.*

GOD must be worshipped in Thought, Word and Deed; that is, in all Things we ought to express an humble Reverence and Adoration of the Sovereign Being, frequently meditating on his great Name; but all Evil and sinful Thinking we must refrain from with Abhorrence, as displeasing to him; and of the Devil that evil Spirit; and which indeed

is contrary to the true Nature and End of *Free-Thinking*; which is a sincere Exercise of the rational Faculty, in order to distinguish between Good and Evil, Truth and Falshood, that we may chuse and acknowledge the one, and avoid and reject the other. And here it may not be unfit to recommend the Care of all our Thoughts, from whence proceed our Words and Actions as naturally as good and evil Fruit from the different Seed sown in the Earth.

AND as the truest and most sublime End of thinking (which is the reasonable Service of every intelligent Creature) is the Contemplation, Fear and Adoration of the Almighty Creator; so are we there too greatly Encouraged by that Scripture of *Mal. 3. 16, 17, 18.* which I am concern'd here to transcribe and recommend, and is as follows, *Then they that fear'd the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkned and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his Name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that Day when I make up my Jewels, and I will spare them as a Man spareth his own Son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.*

IN which Scripture we may observe how great and glorious a Reward is promis'd to

those that sanctifie the Name of the Lord ; the Consideration of which must needs raise their Love and Admiration, and add to their present Delight in such holy Thoughts.

BUT on the Contrary it is to be fear'd, that evil Thinkers and Actors, when the Divine Spirit and Light wou'd inspire them with good Thoughts, or convince them of their Sins, endeavour to stifle or overcome such Thoughts or Motions as wou'd awaken them to Righteousness, or restrain them from Sin ; and strive by their natural Wit to reason the good Spirit out of their Souls ; at the same Time opening their Hearts to the evil Spirit and his Suggestions, which thy hug to their own Destruction. But indeed to judge rightly of these Things, if a Man have ever so much natural Wit and strength of Reason, it must be sanctified through his faithful Subjection to the divine Will, and rais'd by divine Inspiration ; which as far surpasses human Reason, as Heaven is above the Earth. May our Men of bright natural Thought think clearly and seriously of this. This is evident in the Case of that great Apostle *Paul*, who was educated at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, in the perfect Manner of the Law, yet by all his Knowledge could not justly distinguish concerning Religion, but was a Persecuter of the Church of Christ : But when his Knowledge and Spirit came to be sanctified by the Grace and Spirit of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, then, and not till then,

then, he became of great and good Use and Service to his Maker and Mankind. Then his Reason and Religion became Spiritual, *who had not confer'd with Flesh and Blood, but had been obedient to the heavenly Vision, Gal. 1. 16.* and he says, (1 Cor. 15. 17.) *If in this Life only we have hope, we are of all Men most miserable.* So that his Hope and Expectation (as of all faithful Believers) must have been of another Life, and the Kingdom of God hereafter; *for here (says he) we have no continuing City, but seek one to come, Heb. 13. 14.* And though the Condition of such in this Life is often expos'd to much Persecution and Trouble for their Faith's Sake towards the Name of God, and Testimony against this World, and the evil Spirit ruling therein; yet blessed be the most High, he gives them Strength, and the Assurance of his Favour, whereby they endure to the End, as well as that he refreshes them with his outward Blessings & Comforts: So that they may well say with his ancient Servant Job, *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of the Lord and not Evil? Job 2. 10.* Thus Afflictions have been indeed usually call'd, but they often in the Hand of God are Means of redeeming the Soul, and raising up many excellent Vertues, when they are rightly submitted to.

BUT to return. I wou'd enquire what Subject we can possibly chuse so worthy of our Meditation, or from whence so great
Be.

Benefit can redound both to Spirit and Body? the Fear and Thoughts of Almighty God, which are inspir'd by his Grace, sanctifying our Hearts, thereby render us more fit to receive his Favours both to Spirit and Body, which he multiplies according to his Wisdom and good Pleasure; and all our Faculties and Passions being redeem'd and govern'd by the Spirit of Faith, we shall possess and enjoy all Things in a more regular and excellent Manner. But who is there that hath not been so great a Partaker of the many Blessings, with which the infinite Creator filleth the World, and in an especial Manner encompasseth Mankind, as not to be thereby oblig'd to a continual Acknowledgment thereof, and Remembrance of the great and bountiful Author? the State therefore of the Wicked and Rebellious is stigmatiz'd in Holy Scripture with this Character in particular, that *God is not in all their Thoughts*, Psal. 10. 4. And indeed for this came his Judgment upon the old World of the Ungodly; who cannot be suppos'd ever to have thought of the adorable Lord, since *every Imagination and Thought of their Hearts were only evil continually*, as the Almighty himself hath complain'd, *Gen. 6. 5.*

BUT instead of the Returns of Faith and Love, how sad a Consideration is it, that there should among Men be found any so vile and foolish as even to deny the divine Existence, and the Effects of his infinite Power

in the external Creation, and to affirm that all Things have come by Nature, without God or any supernatural Power! which evil Tenet some have endeavour'd to justify and support by natural Reason: [“ Wherein the
 “ Name thereof may indeed be abus'd; but
 “ Reason itself, which concludes nothing
 “ without Evidence, can never declare in
 “ Favour of a Proposition, for which not
 “ only none can appear, but against which
 “ the whole World is full of it. But let
 “ this be dispos'd for the Judgment of Reason. When therefore it is said, That all
 “ Things have come by Nature; if thereby
 “ we are to understand that natural Things
 “ are severally Self-productive; this will be
 “ disprov'd by daily Experience, for we may
 “ observe, that they depend one upon another, and upon various Causes for Production and Subsistence, without which,
 “ neither in a State of Nature could possibly be. But if it be meant of the universal System of natural Things collectively, this will less be allow'd of many than of any Particular of them; because that wou'd destroy the Nature of a Self-productive Power, which cannot be limited from being infinite, and therefore can be but one. One infinite supreme Nature therefore only can have self-existed, and must have been the supernatural Author & Power, by whom all other Beings have existed: which
 “ refutes

“ refutes the above Error, and rationally
 “ proves and eftablifhes the great Truth in
 “ question.”]

And this the Christian Religion teaches in the greateft Perfection, that the Creator of all Things is God; an infinite eternal Spirit, who filleth all Things; who having been pleas'd to manifefh his eternal Power and Godhead in the vifible Frame of the Universe, beareth Witnefs of himfelf therein by his Providence and Judgments; and in every Soul of Man by his inward Inspirations; efppecially the fincere Believer, in whom his Spirit dwells and operates.

O that Men therefore would lift up their Minds and open their Hearts to him, when by his holy Spirit, he reproves them for Sin, and brings a Damp upon their Spirits for Evil! from which they would perhaps, if they cou'd, run; or divert themfelves from the Senfe of it: but alas! there is no fleeing from his Prefence, who is every where; nor avoiding his Judgment; whose Kingdom comprehends all Things: (but Wo efppecially is to them with whom his Spirit ceafes ftriving!) Holy David certainly was very fenfible of this, when he wrote that admirable De- fcription of the divine Omniprefence. Pfal. 139. 7 ver. to 12. *Whither fhall I go from thy Spirit, or Whither fhall I flee from thy Prefence? if I afcend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there.* If,

I take the *Wings of the Morning*, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea, even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the Darkness shall cover me, even the Night shall be Light about me, yea the Darkness bideth not from Thee; but the Night shineth as the Day: the Darkness and the Light are both alike to Thee. With these Apprehensions of the infinite Power and Presence of the Almighty, I shall pass to the Relation promis'd in the Title Page, which may here be properly inserted.

MY Author was *Jonathan Dickinson*, Merchant in *Philadelphia*, who was present with the young Men, whom this extraordinary Providence beset, at *Port-Royal* in *Jamaica*; he gave me the following Account. Two ingenious young Men (who were lately arriv'd at *Jamaica* from *London*,) discoursing about Earthquakes, asserted that all Things came by Nature; and so argued thereupon that it brought Terror upon the Company, who were many at Dinner in an upper Room: that whilst this lasted, (to the Astonishment of all present) the Earth began to move and tremble, which put most of them to flight in such Haste, that they ran one almost over another, some down Stairs, others leaping over the Balcony. But my Author said, he consider'd that there was no running from

C

Divine

Divine Providence, and that the same Hand which moved the Earth was able to preserve him; in which he trusted and was preserv'd: and not only then, but at other Times, especially among the Cannibals of *Florida*; as his Book of *God's protecting Providence*, &c. signally evinceth. Thus as he continued with the young Men in the same Room (O terrible to relate, and my Heart and Hand tremble in the Writing thereof,) the mighty Hand of an offended God struck these young Men with Death, and they fell down and never rose more, being in all Appearance unprepar'd for so sudden a Change. And how many other gay witty young People have been suddenly snatch'd away by Death, though perhaps not so immediately, nor in so extraordinary a Manner, seems worthy of Reflection. The Author of this Account added, that he took up the young Men and laid 'em one upon a Bed, and the other upon a Couch; but that they never spake again after their Blasphemy against God and his Works. -- Upon which I think it very natural as well as necessary to remark, that this was indeed an eminent Instance of the just Judgment of God against such as deny his wonderful Power and Providence in the Creation; with this terrible Circumstance, that these unhappy Persons were cut off in the midst of their ungodly Discourse and corrupt Reasoning; without so much Time afforded them as to ask

ask Pardon and crave Mercy of a provok'd Lord; which is very dreadful to consider: and I especially recommend it to the serious Reflections of all such as affect the Name of *Free-Thinkers* (as they are commonly distinguished) that they may no longer (under such a Pretence) abuse their Understandings with a Latitude of profane and evil Thinking; who, as they must needs be sensible, they have not confer'd the excellent Faculty of Reason upon themselves; so they may as certainly conclude they never receiv'd it to exclude his Existence, Power and Providence out of the World, who gave it them; nor to employ it to their own Destruction, by such a Perversion thereof, which must inevitably be the Consequence without timely and due Repentance; but that they may apply themselves to him for true Wisdom, who is the eternal Fountain of it, who would direct all their Thoughts aright therein, then would they find a substantial and enduring Happiness and Satisfaction in the honourable Thoughts and Practice of true Religion and Vertue; and that all vain and evil Thoughts directly tended to the Misery and Destruction of Mankind.

LASTLY, if any Expression in this short Tract should prove successful to promote in any Measure the Contemplation of the divine Being; the Consideration of Man's Duty to
 C. 2. Him.

Him his Almighty Creator; or to convince but one Soul of the Error of his Thoughts and Ways; the Author will think himself richly rewarded for his Endeavours, and reverently ascribe the Glory and Praise to GOD, the prime Author and Mover of every good Thing, who is worthy for ever.

THE END.

The POSTSCRIPT.

IF we duly consider the Nature of Human Understanding, as we shall necessarily be led to admire the wonderful Author of so excellent a Gift to Mankind, according to the Power and Extent thereof; so shall we be forced to acknowledge its Imperfection, not only where the Natures of Things exceed its Views, but also in tracing and explicating that Evidence which many of them afford; but especially as to its Influence in a moral Respect, how subject is it to be obscur'd, and its Faculties disabled by the Violence of those Passions and Affections with which human Nature is too ordinarily agitated. So that Man cannot but want some extraordinary Assistance; and lie under the greatest Obligation to submit every Faculty and Affection

vince to the Direction and Disposal of that infinite
 Power and Wisdom, which having so won-
 derfully constituted, can best preserve, and
 conduct him to a State of Happiness.

CAN it then be thought unrighteous in the
 Supreme Disposer of all Things, so to have
 fashion'd our Natures, and ranged them
 (though above many other Beings, yet) in
 such a State of Dependence, as continually
 to express his Sovereign Power and Rectitude?
 Since by our entire Resignation to his divine
 Hand, we may be transform'd to a greater
 Likeness of him, and have a Spirit and Na-
 ture superinduc'd of divine Extraction from
 the Father of Lights; whom to know and
 contemplate through the Revelation of his
 Son Jesus Christ (his infinite Love to Man-
 kind) is eternal Life and supreme Happiness.

WHICH Mystery far above human Un-
 derstanding, he hath been pleased to reveal
 by his Spirit, who searcheth the deep Things
 of God, in order to work in us Faith in, and
 the highest Admiration of that exalted Name,
 by whom he hath visited our low Estate, and
 would redeem it in him into the greatest
 Dignity it is capable of. The Particulars of
 whose Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and
 Ascension into eternal Glory, though highly
 admirable, and which the blessed Apostle,
 who had been an Eye-Witness of his Glory,
 says, *the Angels desire to look into*, 1 Pet. 1. 12.
 can none of them however be perverted to a
 Sense.

Sense of being repugnant to Reason; because not impossible to infinite Love or infinite Power; who could abase himself from his Glory, and be made Flesh in a Virgin; cou'd work all Miracles, and the greatest of all, the raising himself from the Dead; and cou'd ascend up where he was before. All which are agreeable to right Reason, and appear so with Ravishment to That enlightened and sanctified, especially with the Evidence of the holy Spirit the Comforter, which confirmeth the humble Believer in the saving Faith and Knowledge of these Things to the End. And I am glad of this Occasion to distinguish to thee (*ingenious Reader!*) that though no divine Truths are contrary to natural Reason; yet, as they far transcend it they are not comprehensible by it, as other Truths within the reach of its Capacity are: As no Nature below Man, nor qualified with Reason as he is, can possibly know as he knows. Which Observation is not of the least Importance to us: for if it therefore follows, *that no Man knows the Things of God, but the Spirit of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 11. then can no Man without the Revelation of the same Spirit, know the Mystery of that divine Power, by which he was created, and by which he must be eternally sav'd and bless'd. Grace therefore (or the divine Spirit by its Influence and Inspiration) must be receiv'd and obey'd as an infallible Oracle, if we would

would know and pursue those Things which
 tend to our present and future Happiness; as
 also the Authority of the Holy Scriptures
 submitted to, as having proceeded from the
 same Grace, of which they faithfully testify,
 and of that which is necessary to be by us
 believ'd and practis'd.

THE Excellency and Necessity of which
 divine Record to himself, Man certainly must
 acknowledge, when he considers, that That
 alone has given him an Account of his own
 Origin (which, what Man could have known?)
 and that he may still the better understand
 himself, of his Lapse and Corruption from
 that Excellency and Glory of his Nature,
 (in which he was created) by departing
 from the Truth into a Fable and Notion of
 an Independancy of Nature, and Sufficiency
 of Wisdom without God. So that he is
 become as the Beasts which perish, as to the
 Necessity of Dissolution to his Mortal Part;
 and in his greatest natural Honour may in
 that Respect be compar'd to them, which is
 sufficient to humble him under the Sense of
 his weak elementary State, with all the Glory
 and Advantages that may attend it.

BUT if Man will not be convinc'd of the
 Imperfection and Vanity of his Nature, by
 the Infirmities and Miseries to which it is
 continually subject; nor of the Glory of the
 eternal Majesty, by the infinite Wonders
 thereof, throughout the Universe; rejecting
 the

the Testimony of his own Senses, of every
created Thing, and of the Scripture of
Truth ; nor yet behold this Glory in the
Appearance of the Saviour which he reveals
in every Conscience ; then must his Blindness
be concluded incurable, and his Destruction
unavoidable.



FINIS.